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OUR CONCEPT OF A PERSON

by



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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING 1972

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and
recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for
acceptance, a thesis entitled OUR CONCEPT OF A PERSON,
submitted by Elisabeth Airini Boetzkes, in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

In recent years, the analysis of the concept of a person has been approached in terms of which predicates are, and which are not, uniquely person-predicates. The aim of the author is to show that there are certain predicates which apply strictly to persons which, seen together, shed light on the concept "same person". Specifically, the relation between moral agency, responsibility, and personal identity will be discussed. This discussion will involve some remarks about the concept of action, about those actions which incur praise or blame, and about what is required to be the performer of such actions. The intellectual and moral dimensions of a person will be discussed, and the person as planner. Finally, the author will consider whether our person predicates are applicable only where we have criteria for personal identity.

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Shiner, for his constructive criticism and guidance, and to Professors MacKenzie, Mardiros, and Pocklington for serving on my thesis committee.

I would like to thank my parents for their years of support and encouragement.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Gus, for his patience, optimism, and help.

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CHAPTER I : Persons and Their Predicates

Many contemporary philosophers have looked at the predicates we typically apply to persons in order to piece together a picture of persons. The concept of a person which we have has delineated the area of applicability of the description "person", and philosophers have used this area as a starting point in their analysis. The question "What will not be counted as a person, and why?" has revealed a cluster of person predicates which are a springboard for a greater understanding of what a person is.

P.F. Strawson analyses persons in terms of the M-P predicate distinction. In his book, Individuals, he describes this distinction. "What I mean by the concept of a person is the concept of a type of entity such that both predicates ascribing states of consciousness and predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics, a physical situation etc. are equally applicable to a single individual of that single type." 1.

M predicates are those which persons share with other material objects in the universe, for example, "weighs ten stone", "is in the drawing room". P predicates apply strictly to persons, and are those which imply states of consciousness, "is smiling", "is going for a walk", "is thinking hard", "believes in God". On Strawson's analysis, one can qualify for person predicates only if one also qualifies for corporeal predicates. That is, there can be no disembodied persons. 2. This qualification, that persons must have bodies, is an essential part of Strawson's argument for the possibility of the ascription of predicates which imply consciousness. The argument is, roughly, as follows. I can only ascribe states

of consciousness to myself if I can ascribe them to others. I can ascribe states of consciousness to others only if I can identify them (others). I cannot identify others only as subjects of experience without being involved in circularity. If all I have to go on are private experiences, then I have no criteria for distinguishing mine from those of anyone else. For in identifying others, I am made able to ascribe experiences to myself. Before I can ascribe experiences to others, I do not yet have "my" and "not my" experiences. Some other criterion of identifiability is required. M predicates are necessary for my identification of other subjects of experience, and, therefore, necessary for the possibility of self-ascription of states of consciousness (P predicates). The area of applicability of person predicates is restricted to the area of embodiment.

Strawson's analysis leaves it an open question which kinds of creatures ^{3.} are candidates for the ascription of person predicates. He has not attempted to list the actions which imply consciousness, nor the creatures who perform these actions. He has ignored the difficult area where consciousness-implying predicates merge with self-consciousness-implying predicates. It is on the basis of these two matters, Strawson's restriction of the person predicates to embodied creatures, and his leaving it an open question which creatures qualify for ascription of P predicates, that Roland Puccetti criticizes him.

Puccetti begins his book, Persons, with an analysis and criticism of Strawson. The M-P predicate distinction is at once

too broad and too narrow, Puccetti claims. It is too broad in that many of the P predicates would apply to animals as well as human beings, if P predicates are simply those which imply consciousness, as Strawson defines them. Puccetti also objects to Strawson's restriction of person-status to those creatures to whom M predicates are also applicable. This he regards as a narrow-minded view in that it leaves out the possibility of disembodied persons or a personal God. Because of his dissatisfaction with Strawson on these grounds, Puccetti wants to create a new category of predicates, C predicates, which will imply consciousness, though not necessarily person-status. The function of the C predicate is, in fact, to cover the gap between ordinary M predicates which can apply to material objects, dogs, or men, and the highly sophisticated person predicates. The intermediate points between M and P are problematic: they could apply to men or dogs (for example, "likes warm weather", "is going for a walk", and, perhaps, "is thinking"). Hence, they are labelled C predicates to escape this difficulty of deciding whether the creatures to whom they apply are necessarily persons. As Puccetti himself rightly points out, we still have a long way to go to get a precise analysis of persons. We have simply narrowed down the variety of descriptions which are commonly used as person predicates by adding a new class of predicates which only imply consciousness. We are in danger of becoming involved in circularity. We must expand our notion of what a person is to avoid our comments simply amounting to: persons are different from non-persons in that the person predicates apply to them, or, persons are persons!

Let us use Puccetti's list of C and P predicates as our

starting point in the inquiry into what distinguishes persons from 4.
other creatures.

C Predicates

"is in pain"

"feels hungry"

"likes warm weather"

"is looking for a way out"

"dreams continually"

"is excited"

"is lustful"

"sees the white box"

"knows the right direction"

"remembers that clearly"

P Predicates

"predicts rain soon"

"is a slave to his emotions"

"considers green an ugly
choice"

"wants to secure justice"

"is euphoric"

"is in anguish"

"appreciates the difficulty"

"is an astute judge of
character"

"is absolutely trustworthy"

"is a smug hypocrite"

"refuses to go to extremes"

There are many more. Now, in examining these two lists of predicates, we must attempt to discover what is implied by the P predicates in virtue of which those to whom they apply qualify as persons. We find, in our preliminary examination of the P predicates that there is a distinctly intellectual character to them. They presuppose "access to and familiarity with a functioning conceptual scheme".⁴ This qualifies a creature as a symbol-user, and in order to be considered a person, according to Puccetti, one must be a fairly competent symbol-user. And this latter characteristic, claims Puccetti, disqualifies non-humans from person-status.

I think the C-predicate-P-predicate distinction is a useful

one in that it clears the way for the characterisation of the person⁵. as symbol-user. However, its usefulness as a means of distinguishing strictly between animals and persons, which is what Puccetti had in mind, is not so clear. What it accomplishes, in effect, is the setting up of a continuum, along which degrees of consciousness merge with degrees of what we could call self- or person-consciousness, and the point at which the two separate is not really any more clear because of the introduction of the C predicates. Presumably those creatures to whom M and C, but not P predicates are applicable are not symbol-users. It is not yet clear what is implied by this, if this is what distinguishes persons from non-persons; if, on the continuum, the beginning of symbol-using marks the beginning of personhood. In that case, what we need is a clarification of what Puccetti means by "symbol-user" and "having access to and familiarity with a functioning conceptual scheme".

Perhaps his understanding of these phrases can be exemplified by looking at his discussion of the predicate "is thinking hard". This predicate can be taken as either a P or a C predicate, depending upon whether we regard it as involving "the manipulation of ideas". If a creature "is thinking hard" about how to get a bone buried in the garden, it is necessary to ascribe no more than a C level of consciousness, however, if a creature's "thinking hard" involves "memory, imagination, and intelligence", there is evidence for concluding that the creature is a person. Obviously the secret of being a symbol-user, and, hence, of being a person, lies in using "memory, imagination, and intelligence".

This clarification which Puccetti offers is not very helpful.

I do not think that Puccetti's outline of what "real thinking" is is sufficient to deter the animal enthusiasts. It is not at all clear that the dog burying the bone does not remember certain things about the bone-burying process (where the garden is, for instance). We can argue for his remembering this by his behaviour, by the fact that he can find the garden, even in winter when the scent is hard to follow. Again, we often speak of an animal's being intelligent, responding to his environment quickly in a way which is to his best advantage (the mouse in the maze). It is not immediately obvious that these qualities, namely "memory, imagination, and intelligence", which allegedly separate persons from other creatures, are not applicable to other creatures. We certainly use such predicates as "is remembering" and "is intelligent" to refer to animals. (We seldom ascribe "is imagining" to an animal because it is an activity for which there is no specific, easily identifiable set of behavioural manifestations - non-linguistic ones. Nevertheless, one would hardly want to claim that the crucial difference between personal thought and animal thought lay solely in the person's capacity to imagine).

We can, of course, retreat and say that "C-remembering" and "C-being intelligent" are not the same as remembering and being intelligent for a person, but then we are simply back at the beginning, and must thrash around again for better criteria for putting our finger on what distinguishes person thought from animal thought. To say that a person's thought involves memory, imagination, and

intelligence is surely not sufficient.

The notion of the person as symbol-user is an important one in Puccetti's analysis. Perhaps we should proceed by clarifying this notion and from it make precise our understanding of person thought.

CHAPTER II : Symbols and Concepts

Puccetti does not go into any further detail about symbol-using, except to link up the use of symbols with having and using a "functioning conceptual scheme". I want to spend a little time clarifying this notion and the relationship between symbol-using and concept-forming.

Philosophers generally begin to describe the symbol-user by making a distinction between a symbol and a sign. A sign is an indicator of something else. Signs can be natural, for instance certain types of clouds are a sign of rain; or they can be man-made. When signs are contrived, or man-made, they are also symbols. A symbol is something which stands for something else. When a symbol functions as a sign, the fact that it does stand for something else makes it possible for us to understand what is indicated by it. A road sign with an arrow on it, for instance, could not function as an indicator of a bend in the road unless we understood that the arrow stood for "There is x type of bend in the road ahead". Symbols are always contrived, always agreed upon. The significance of being a symbol-user comes from the fact that your use of symbols indicates that you are a certain kind of creature : the kind of creature who is part of a community : a community which can communicate in a special way. The connection between the actual symbol and what it stands for is an artificial one, that is, its meaningfulness derives primarily from our deciding to use it in a certain way. The successful use of symbols depends upon this decision. I might point out that

the successful abuse of symbols depends upon the prior agreement to use a symbol in a certain way. Hence, if we want to play a practical joke, and turn a road sign so that it points the wrong way, the success of our joke depends upon the driver's interpreting the road sign in the manner previously agreed upon, to stand for a proposition of the form "Edmonton lies x miles in the direction indicated by the arrow". Thus, the community to which a symbol-user belongs is a community which can take squiggles, or noises, and decide to use them in a certain way, according to a certain rule or convention.

Some symbols stand for objects, some are used for pointing out an aspect of an object, some to stand for or describe ideas. It is not only the thing which the symbol stands for which gives it meaning, but the way we decide to use it. This is where the relationship with concepts is important. If there were no functioning conceptual scheme which we share, symbols could not be "tied to" the things they stand for; the rules of symbol-using could not be followed on a large scale. This is not to say that language should be static, but simply that a certain conceptual community, a stability is necessary, in order for communication, symbol-using, to be possible.

Human language, that is, verbal symbol-using, is not to be considered the only kind of symbol-using, the only kind of language. We speak of "sign-language" for the dumb; we can imagine creatures who set up their language through other performances.^{1.}

The complicated use of symbols we make in human language

presupposes a set of concepts which makes it possible for us to communicate intelligently about things we are perceiving, not perceiving, or things we cannot perceive, (unicorns). We can talk about the relationships between concepts, about what concepts are, about what symbols are, only because we are able to rise above our perceptual environment. Having a concept of a table means knowing what a table is, that one is like another in certain respects and not in others, what counts as a table and what does not, what tables are used for, and that the table is where we eat. Our understanding of the table as the place where we eat is expressed in our non-linguistic behaviour as well as our linguistic, for the table is where we go at meal times, when we are called for a meal, or when the dinner bell rings. But having a concept of a table means that we are able to express in our linguistic behaviour, beliefs about tables when there are no tables present, and when it is not a meal time. Through our communal use of symbols, we are justified in ascribing to each other certain intellectual activities which cannot be ascribed to non-persons.

One difference between C-thinking and P-thinking can be characterised in terms of what we are justified in ascribing to the different creatures, and when. We can say of a dog, "He is thinking hard about how to get a bone buried in the garden" only when at least some of the following conditions obtain: he has a bone, he is in the garden, he is pacing around, pawing at the ground, looking quizzical. Even under these conditions, we cannot be sure that the proposition "He doesn't know what to do with the bone" is not equally true of the dog, being inconsistent with the first

description of his activity. We are able to ascribe, with a much greater degree of certainty, similar predicates to persons, and dissimilar, far more complex, predicates. To test the truth of "That person is thinking hard about how to get the corpse buried in the garden" we need only ask him whether he is thinking, and about what. At a much later date we may justifiably say of him, "He is thinking about how he buried that corpse in the garden", something which we can never say of a non-linguistic creature, for we can never be sure whether he is remembering, imagining, dreaming, or not thinking at all!

Persons are symbol-users and concept-formers. Because persons are symbol-users we can ascribe to them many attributes on the basis of their use of symbols, particularly on the basis of their linguistic behaviour. With animals, on the other hand, while they may react to natural signs (ie. they may find shelter at the first clap of thunder) or they may be taught to respond to a certain contrived signal, (ie. Pavlov's dog, which salivated at the sound of the dinner bell), we cannot infer from their behaviour conceptual activity, for we are unable to demonstrate successfully that their reaction to a stimulus, while similar to our reaction, involves the interpretation of a symbol, as it does for us.

Non-persons do not make squiggles or a noise and confer meaning upon it as persons do. Non-persons, having learnt that a certain sound indicates a certain occurrence, do not go on to question the relation between the sound and the occurrence. Non-persons, having been taught to express their desires in certain

ways, (a whine to be let out, a bark for food), do not go on to combine their expressions in different ways to express different things, or make new expressions.

The use of symbols plays a prominent part in our understanding of what it is to be rational. Once we share a language, we have the tools at our disposal not only to report on our intentions, desires and beliefs, but to give reasons for what we think and do. Giving reasons, knowing what counts, not only as a reason, but as a good reason for a belief, proposition, or hypothesis, being able to challenge the relevance or importance of the reasons others offer, is a large part of what we mean by a creature's being rational.

Persons are not only intelligent, but rational. We speak of a creature's being intelligent when it can modify its behaviour to its own advantage, to suit its changing needs and desires, or to adapt to a changing environment. Being rational, however, enables a creature to do more than, or even the opposit and state why. Being rational enables a creature to challenge the "why" of others, to challenge their justification for the claims they make. Having a language, being able to confer meaning upon and to manipulate, symbols, makes it possible to justify our behaviour, including the claims we make.

Giving reasons, carrying on a rational performance, can be broken down into the ability to make two kinds of statements : universal statements of the form "Whenever x, then y", and past particular statements, of the form, "There was at least one x where y did not follow". These two types of statement furnish a creature

with a reason-giving, reason-denying vocabulary; the ability to express them is necessary for a creature to be considered rational.

For a creature's performances to be considered rational, it must have the equipment (words, dances) to express these two kinds of beliefs separately. This is necessary because one statement is offered as a reason for the present belief. "Whenever you bury a bone, it tends to stay buried," serves as a reason for believing that "the bone I buried here last spring is still here". If a creature cannot express these separately then we cannot tell whether he understands the reason-giving relationship between them and intends the former to serve as a reason for the latter.

Now, let us look, once again, at the C and P predicates, and try to formulate the difference between them more strictly. The C predicates can be ascribed to the kinds of creatures who are not symbol-users, and hence do not have a conceptual framework. C predicates imply consciousness, but not rationality, not the ability to understand when something counts as a reason for something else, as evidence, and to evaluate the relative importance of information to a belief or proposition. This activity can only be done by a concept-former, because he is able to separate himself from his perceptual environment and work with an understanding of different cases, both past and hypothetical, through his possession of concepts. He can manipulate them and communicate with others through his use of symbols.

Consider the P predicate "predicts rain soon". We saw in the discussion of signs and symbols, that animals may react in a certain

way to the first clap of thunder, they may run for shelter from the rain to follow. Why would we not consider this behaviour the prediction of rain? Because it is not obvious from this behaviour that the animal understands that the thunder clap may be a reason for believing that it will soon rain, or that, in some cases, when conditions are different and other information is available, the thunder clap is not a good reason for believing that it will rain soon. A prediction involves the weighing of evidence, or at any rate, the appearance of a weighing of evidence. It is appropriate to ask what the reasons for the prediction are. None of these concepts applies to the behaviour of animals after the first thunder clap. Before we would consider their behaviour to be rational, we would have to observe that they sometimes refrain from running for shelter, and this would have to occur on those occasions when rain did not follow, because conditions were different in the relevant respects. There would also have to be some mechanism whereby the animals communicated their belief that these other conditions being different was the reason for their not looking for shelter, as they understood that under these conditions, even if there was thunder, there would not be rain. Only if this was possible would we consider their looking for shelter after a clap of thunder a prediction of rain.

A creature to whom the C predicates apply must be capable of desires, needs, short-term memory and response to certain stimuli (as in "knows the right direction", "finds it pleasant", "remembers that clearly"). We can call such creatures "intelligent"

according to how well they perform the actions which are not simply matters of unlearned response. However, the abilities necessary to explain the "C-type" activities do not include the possession of concepts or the rational use of symbols. These things are restricted to the P-column. And none of these P predicates can be explained without presupposing these abilities.

We have separated persons from other creatures in virtue of their ability to form concepts and use symbols. Because persons can form concepts, they have available to them a world separate from their environment of the perceptual present. Again, because they have access to concepts, they can communicate about things other than what they perceive at the moment. I want to go on now to discuss how this intellectual dimension of a person is related to the other dimensions of a person, specifically the person as a moral creature. Is it in virtue of their intellectual character that persons can be moral? Is it because they are concept-formers and symbol-users that they are held responsible for their actions? The following chapters of the thesis will be devoted to exploring these relationships.

CHAPTER III : The Moral Predicates

Looking over the list of person predicates, we are struck by their intellectual character, but also by their moral character. Predicates with moral significance, like "wants to secure justice", "is absolutely trustworthy", "has a benign tolerance", "is a smug hypocrite" seem to be restricted to the P column. We saw in the last chapter that the intellectual character of the P predicates does not spill over into the C- column. It seems that the moral predicates apply only where the intellectual predicates apply.¹ Being moral seems to be a very important part of being a person. If we took away all the moral predicates or the possible moral significance of the predicates in the P column, it would be questionable whether we were describing persons at all. While the moral predicates seem to depend upon the creature's being of a certain intellectual type (they do not apply to creatures with C- type consciousness), the intellectual predicates alone, devoid of moral significance, would not accurately describe a person. The moral words seem to have their rightful place amongst the intellectual predicates, which indicates that there is a close relationship between being a rational creature and being a moral one. What is the connection between them?

I argue in this chapter, that there are two kinds of intellectual activities, or capabilities, which make ascriptions of moral predicates possible. I am not arguing that a creature's being intellectual always implies that he is moral, nor do I intend to reduce the moral to the intellectual. My object is to

point out what I believe to be at the core of the connection between the intellectual and the moral in the case of persons. My discussion will, I hope, explain why the moral predicates appear only in the P column, and tie in my discussion of the person as concept-former and symbol-user.

We have seen that, in virtue of the ability of persons to form concepts, to communicate rationally, that persons are not tied to the perceptually present. What is perceptually present can be tied up with the memories of past experiences to form the history of the perceiver. Because the perceiver is aware of this history, he can formulate predictions about future perceptions and events, having an awareness of the pattern of past events. What binds these experiences, past, present, and forward-looking, is the perceiver's awareness of himself as recogniser, concept-former, and rememberer. This, I think, is what we mean when we say that persons are self-conscious. That persons are self-conscious is a fact about their "intellectual side" which links up with the moral. I want to claim that being self-conscious is a necessary condition for being moral.

To begin, I would like to look at some comments in Stuart Hampshire's Thought and Action on the ability of persons get a double look at themselves, simultaneously as observer and observed.

He says:

"I can make a double reference to myself without contradiction, when I refer to myself, first, as the person observing, and, secondly, as the person observed. I may become aware of myself

as someone who is trying to annoy someone else; I suddenly observe myself doing this. But as soon as I become in this way self-conscious about my own activity, the situation, as I see it, that is, the situation to which my action is adapted, changes. The situation, as viewed by an informed outside observer, has also changed, because of the additional factor of my self-consciousness. (If I continue in this activity) I cannot escape the burden of intention and therefore of responsibility, which is bestowed upon me by knowledge of what I am doing, that is, by recognition of the situation confronting me and the difference that my action is making."²

This situation, as described by Hampshire, in which I find myself, is a moral one. It is one to which the concepts of praise and blame apply. The situation is a moral one, first of all, because I am a moral agent. Any state of affairs where pleasure or pain occurs is not a moral one - only those situations which are initiated by a moral agent, or involve a person as moral agent. For instance, if you step on a rusty nail and are in pain, the situation is not necessarily a moral one; if I plant the nail there so that you will step on it, it is a moral situation. Again, if you shoot an animal for food, the situation is not a moral one; if you get a great delight out of seeing the animal in pain, however, the situation is a moral one. The reason the situation Hampshire cites is a moral one, even before I am aware of myself as someone hurting someone else, is that I am the kind of creature who can sometimes produce pleasure or pain, knowingly. If the pain in this situation was produced by a rusty nail or an insect bite, it would hardly be considered a moral situation. Neither the rusty nail, nor the insect, is a moral agent. We have, then, a moral situation where I am, as yet unconsciously, inflicting pain on another person. As

soon as the element of self-consciousness is added, when I become aware of what I am doing, I become praise or blame worthy. Self-consciousness is in this way a necessary condition for being held praise or blame worthy.

But I wanted to make the stronger claim that self-consciousness is a necessary condition for any ascription of the moral predicates. I can argue for this point in the following manner. If I am never self-conscious, never aware of my own actions, I can never be considered praise or blameworthy, I cannot then be considered a moral agent. And if I am not a moral agent, the moral predicates are not applicable to me. The element of self-consciousness, which itself presupposes conceptual activity, is one of the reasons why the moral predicates occur in the P column and not in the C.

The knowledge which incriminates me in this situation is not merely, however, my self-conscious awareness of myself as the initiator of an act. Also important is my understanding of the effect of an act of this kind. If, when I acted, I was never aware of what my action really was, what the consequences and implications of my act were, while I may act self-consciously, observing myself acting, I would not be considered a moral agent. In a broader sense than that covered by self-consciousness, I could not be described as knowing what I am doing.

It is when creatures are capable of these two kinds of knowledge, the special kind of knowing that renders them self-conscious, and the understanding of cause and effect relationships in general, and as it applies to this particular case, that the necessary conditions

for being a moral agent, at least two of them, are met.³ These two necessary conditions for being a moral agent can be used to distinguish moral from non-moral creatures. If these intellectual performances must be possible for a moral agent, then creatures that do not have the ability to perform them cannot be considered moral. There are animal acts which exhibit greater and lesser degrees of consciousness, some verging on self-consciousness, but this alone does not make a creature moral. The creature must still have a knowledge of what kinds of effects will very likely issue from their specific act. It is not enough to be simply aware of oneself acting; one must be aware also, of the significance of oneself as an agent in a causal world. This kind of awareness presupposes that a creature be the kind to whom the intellectual predicates are applicable.

The understanding a person has of cause and effect relationships becomes more complex as he begins to exercise his agency. He begins to see himself as a creature who is expected to do certain things by other moral agents. He begins to assimilate "moral knowledge". Knowing what will count as a virtuous or vicious action, predicting the consequences of our actions, understanding what is expected of us, this is the kind of moral knowledge we expect persons to have, in virtue of their being moral agents. Because persons are able to have this kind of knowledge, the concepts of praise and blame are applicable to the class of persons. And, in a particular case, we look for an indication of this kind of knowledge before justifiably

CHAPTER IV : Action

I have been speaking of the notion of agency with reference to the moral person-predicates without defining "action" or distinguishing different kinds of agents. Now I want to look at the concept of a person as agent, what kinds of creatures can be called intentional agents, and why the actions of persons are significant.

We speak of a person's being responsible for an action¹ as opposed to a movement, say the twitching of a muscle, and we do this because of two beliefs we hold about the nature of action. First of all, we believe that persons have knowledge about cause and effect relationships, as I argued in the last chapter, and this implies that they understand where their specific actions fit into a larger pattern. Secondly, we believe that persons can control their actions, and their deciding to control them in a certain way is referred to as intention. I want to argue that these two components set the actions of persons apart from the acts of other creatures. The following questions will be important: Is it true that only persons, concept-formers, possess the necessary intellectual equipment for performing actions, as opposed to simply movements? Can animals form intentions? Do they have this kind of control over their acts? Can they decide to act in a certain way, and carry it out?

The problem we are immediately faced with when we ask these questions is an epistemological one: how would we find out whether animals have intentions? How would we discover when their behaviour was simply determined by a certain cause, being something over which

they have no control?

Some philosophers hold the view that intention is inextricably associated with the notion of declaration of intention, and wish to restrict intention-language to the area of persons, identifying declaration of intention with the possibility of expressing intentions in symbols. Hampshire, for instance, argues that it is not because animals do not in fact declare their intentions that we do not attribute intentions to them, but that it is senseless to attribute intentions to the kind of creature who "has not the means to reflect upon, or announce to itself or to others, its own future behaviour".²

In chapters I and II, I discussed the limits of applicability of the person predicates, pointing out the difficulty of justifying the ascription of an intellectual predicate to a non-linguistic creature, of distinguishing what may appear to be rational behaviour from stimulus-response behaviour. This problem of justifying such an ascription applies in the case of intentions. To qualify as intentional, the behaviour exhibited by a creature must point to a specific intellectual performance, the decision to control acts in a certain way, and be distinguishable from behaviour that is not so governed. Can certain non-linguistic behaviour on the part of animals be considered equivalent to a linguistic declaration of intention on the part of a person? Consider the bone-burying case, for example. When we see our dog making a beeline for the garden, carrying a bone in his mouth, and if, furthermore, it has been his practice to bury his bones in a favourite spot, and he seems to be

heading for it, would we not very likely say that he intends to bury it? Could we correctly say this?

First of all, I want to make a distinction between short and long term intentions, and argue that we are not justified in attributing long term intentions to a creature who cannot declare his intentions linguistically. We can illustrate the difference between long and short term intentions by considering an example where someone asks of someone else, "What are you going to do?" There are at least two appropriate answers to the question: "I'm going to get an application form", or, "I'm going to do a three-year general B.A.". Both of these answers may be correct answers to the question, although context usually spells out which kind of intention, long or short term, is being inquired about. Persons can typically form plans long in advance, can direct many of their particular actions towards the fulfillment of this plan or intention. These actions, when regarded separately, are the fulfillment of many short term intentions, but can be regarded also as a unity — as one large action which is the carrying out of one long term intention. That a series of actions is a part of a long term pattern is not always obvious, and which goal it is directed towards is hard to determine also. For this reason, we can be justified in attributing long term intentions to a creature who can express his intentions linguistically, while we are in doubt about whether, if ever, we can accurately interpret a person's non-linguistic behaviour as directed towards a specific end. But it is nevertheless appropriate to consider what the long

term intention of a person is, because he is the kind of creature who is capable of controlling his actions, over a long period of time in that way. We consider speculation about his long term intentions appropriate because it is in principle possible to discover what the long term intention could be. There is no method we could employ with which to justify the ascription of a long term intention to an animal. We may believe we have detected a pattern in his acts, but the "end" towards which they are directed can only be guessed at, and the guess can never be verified.

I have described intention as the decision to control one's actions in a certain way. I have argued that what makes it impossible to ascribe long term intentions to animals is the difficulty of knowing whether a series of acts was directed towards a specific end, and, if so, which end. There are, however, apparent counter-examples to my claim that we cannot be justified in ascribing a long term intention to an animal. Why could we not, for instance, describe a salmon as having a long term intention to return to its birthplace? After all, salmon invariably do this; their behaviour on this score is thoroughly predictable. I think that I can circumvent this kind of apparent counter-example by my analysis of the kind of control implied by having an intention. Forming a long term intention is deciding on one course of action rather than another, selecting certain actions as being those that will enable you to achieve a goal. This kind of control is characteristic of the long term intender. It would make very little sense to ask of someone "What is your long

term intention?" if there was only one possible course of action to be taken by that person. The very fact that one can say that salmon "invariably" return to their birthplace after a set number of years is a clue to the fact that long term intention language is not appropriate to them. The behaviour of the salmon is not analogous to that of a person who invariably sits down to supper at six p.m. Because a person follows a certain regular pattern of behaviour, we do not suppose that it is impossible for him to do otherwise. However, it is generally believed that the salmon must return to his place of birth, the "invariably" as it describes the salmon's behaviour implies that its future is genetically determined, not simply that it happens to have decided to return to its birthplace. What the behaviour of the salmon is analogous to is a dog's moulting in Spring, a snake's shedding its skin, or a person's breathing while asleep. These occurrences are not intended, they are not things which the dog, the snake, or the person can control. They are thoroughly predictable because they are not dependent upon a decision of ours. They are not the kinds of events which fall under the scope of actions open to the long term intender. I want to deny that the salmon's returning to its birthplace qualifies a example to my claim, because it is not the kind of act which could be counted as intentional in the first place.

I think that with reference to long term intentions, then, Hampshire's remarks about the possibility of a declaration of intention being restricted to persons are accurate.

But can we be justified in attributing to animals short term intentions, such as, "The dog intends to bury the bone"? Can a dog's making a beeline for the garden be considered a non-linguistic declaration of intention? In order to be justified in attributing even a short term intention to animals, their intentions must be expressible separately from the intended act itself. We may want to argue that the dog, in heading for the garden, is expressing an intention to bury the bone, but if we argue this, we seem to be committed to saying that every act is an expression of intention on the part of the performer. What are our criteria for distinguishing between the intentional and the non-intentional acts of animals to be? Which acts are expressions of intention and which are not? When the dog lifts his paw to scratch his ear, why should we not interpret the lifting of the paw as a declaration of his intention to scratch his ear? Again, we could argue that only those acts which are related in a certain way to the subsequent act (as heading for the garden is to burying the bone), are declarations of intention, the latter act being the completion of the intention expressed in the former act. But this still leaves us with a difficulty. Having an intention and declaring an intention are not necessarily related to completing the intention in the intended act. We can declare that action x is what we intend to do, and then change our minds. How are we to distinguish "twitching of the muscle" type movements or stimulus response type acts from declarations of intention which are never fulfilled in the intended

act? By permitting animal acts to be interpreted as declarations of intention we run the risk of collapsing the distinction between intentional and non-intentional acts. An act which does not appear to be related to a subsequent piece of behaviour may always be interpreted as a declaration of intention which was not fulfilled. It can be argued that acts of this kind, rather than being classed as non-intentional, can be classed as intentional for our criteria for what counts as intentional behaviour only require that the behaviour be interpretable as a declaration of intention. Any non-intentional act could, therefore, be interpreted as a declaration of intention.

The behaviour of animals is, in many ways, similar to the behaviour of persons, but different in this important respect, that many of the actions which persons perform are linguistic ones, and this gives a basis for ascribing to them capacities which we have no justification for ascribing to animals.

A further difficulty with ascribing intentions to animals, is that their behaviour cannot do full justice to the meaning of "intention". For instance, we cannot talk of what a dog intended to do before he was interrupted, unless we make "intended to do" equivalent to "would have done". We may say, "Fido would have buried his bone in the garden if we hadn't caught him running up the path; that was what he intended to do". But "he intended to do" can only, and must always, be translated in terms of "would have done:", and the two expressions are not mutually exhaustive

in meaning. We can talk about what a person intended to do, and speculate about what he would have done, and these two may be different. X intended to look for specimens on the beach, but Mrs. Y called him in for a cup of tea. If he had taken the path to the beach, he would have found the body and called the police. The reason we can make this distinction between "intended to do" and "would have done" is that X expressed his intention.

These arguments aside, and just looking at the way we do in fact use "intention", although we may speak of non-persons having intentions, we may even scold them for "deliberately doing" something, we do not take their acts as seriously as we take the acts of persons. We regard an act with greater seriousness according to the degree of control and knowledge we believe the performer to have. That is, the dog who attacks the postman every morning is not regarded as malicious. His attacking the postman may be regarded with embarrassment and guilt by the owners, but this act is not considered, by any of the persons concerned to be intentional. We can discover this by speculating about the kind of reaction the husband's attacking the postman would elicit. The dog is not considered to have the kind of control over his acts that a person has, that control of which deciding to do a certain act, forming an intention, is an example. The dog is far along the continuum towards the "no control at all" end, while we recognise the greater degrees of control in the three year old child, the ten-year old, and the adult.

I have argued that the degree of seriousness with which we regard an act is also dependent on the degree of relevant knowledge we consider the performer to have. The understanding on the part of the agent, of the significance of an act within a larger context, marks off the actions of persons from the acts of animals. While it is difficult to establish the degree of animal consciousness involved in an act, we certainly have no justification for assuming, and we never do, in fact, assume, that the animal has either the kind of control over his act, or the kind of understanding of the world, a person has. Notably, we do not consider the animal to have an understanding of the moral significance of an act.

It seems, then, that the logical difficulties which prevent us from attributing intentions to animals are supported by our everyday notions of the relative significance of the acts of persons and non-persons. In light of this, I feel justified in restricting the use of "intention-language" to person language.

The actions of persons have a significance the acts of non-persons do not have. This significance is based on the notion of persons as intentional agents, as creatures who can plan a course of action, can plan a future, with an understanding of the relationship between themselves, their future action, and the rest of the world. In particular, persons, as moral agents, are aware of the actions, desires, rights, and needs of other persons.

CHAPTER V : Responsibility and the Disembodied Agent

In the last chapter I discussed persons as agents, specifying conditions for agency, and discussing whether persons are the only creatures who meet the conditions. I pointed out that the awareness a person has of the significance of his own actions affects the seriousness with which we regard his actions. It is his understanding of how his actions fit in with the rest of the world, particularly with the desires and rights of other persons, which lays upon him the burden of responsibility.

There are several senses of responsibility which I want to distinguish before I talk about the significance of the notion of responsibility of the concept of a person.

First of all, we speak of a person or thing as responsible for an event simply in causal terms: the heat applied is responsible for the expansion of the gas; the dog's tail is responsible for the smashing of the wine glasses; the neighbour is responsible for leaving the lid off the garbage can. When we use "responsible" in this way, we are not commenting on the culpability of the thing responsible. We are using "responsible" in a purely descriptive sense: we are naming the cause of some event.

There is a second sense of "responsible" which marks off the neighbour case from the other two. We may say that the neighbour is responsible for leaving the lid off the garbage can, and mean that his action is praise or blame worthy. This second sense of "responsible" is reserved for those acts which are performed by

intentional agents, by agents who can control their actions, can choose to act in a certain way. Not every case of an action by an intentional agent is to be considered praise or blame worthy, however. The neighbour may claim, for instance, "I did it, but I am not responsible for it". He is admitting to the first kind of responsibility, admitting that he was the cause, but claiming that he is not praise or blame worthy for it. We may decide that he is not, either because he acted non-intentionally (while he was sleep-walking), or under coercion. If either of these conditions was present, then his act was involuntary. When we judge him, we consider him praise or blame worthy according to the degree to which alternative action would have been possible for him.

For the sake of clarifying exactly which sense of responsibility is important here, I shall run over four possible interpretations of "responsibility".¹

On the first interpretation, a person's being punished, or being considered punishable for a certain act, is sufficient for his being responsible. However, this interpretation of "responsible" makes it possible to lay the blame for an act at the feet of someone other than the agent. For instance, a mother might ask to be punished for an act which one of her children performed without her knowledge, because she wishes to protect her child. Or, a teacher may decide the whole class ought to be punished for the misbehaviour of only one of them, in which none of the others took part. On this interpretation, all those punished are responsible for what happened. I do not find this interpretation of "responsible" satisfactory

because it allows someone innocent of an act to be called "responsible" for it.

On the second interpretation, only the person who performed the act is considered to be responsible, and simply because he performed the act. On this interpretation, my neighbour who left the lid off the garbage can is to be held responsible even if he was coerced into doing so, or did so in his sleep. Clearly, this sense of "responsible" means, simply, being the cause of some event. Using this sense of "responsible", heat, the dog's tail, and the neighbour are all responsible in the same way. The important sense of "responsible" which I am trying to isolate is that which marks off those who act freely and intentionally from those who do not.

A person is responsible for an act, on the third interpretation, if he performed the act and did so intentionally or negligently. This seems to be closer to the way I want to use "responsible". There are still some difficulties, however. The neighbour who left the lid off the garbage can may meet these criteria for responsibility, that is, he was the cause of what happened, he caused it intentionally, but I would still hesitate to call him "responsible" if he was forced to do it. When we are forced to act, we may be well aware of what we are doing, exercising our control over things in a certain way, but not be blameworthy because our ability to act otherwise is severely restricted. This interpretation, then, is still too broad.

The criteria for responsibility set out in the fourth interpretation make provision for these cases. A person is held responsible

if he performed the act, he did so intentionally or negligently, and none of the freedom-constricting factors, such as provocation, self-defence, duress etc., were present. This seems to take care of those cases where it is obvious that x caused y to happen, knew what he was doing, but "couldn't help it" in the sense that alternatives either did not exist, or their consequences outweighed the gravity of the act performed.

If these "freedom-constricting" factors are absent, then we consider someone praise or blame worthy for his action. We do this because behind the notion of responsibility, and, in particular, moral responsibility, lies the notion of the intentional agent, the informed person, who can choose to act in a certain way, can plan a future, and can act in such a way as to help or harm another person, knowingly.

Because persons have the ability to act, knowingly, and because they are able to influence other persons, the degree of responsibility a person carries for a certain action is also judged according to the obligations he carries. A person does not act in a vacuum. Being responsible, for a person, means being an agent against a background of relations and past activities where certain actions are expected of you. Sometimes the background of the expected action is a moral one. Generally, a person is responsible for the performance of his obligations. The type of obligation involved will determine the degree of responsibility. Obligatoriness occurs in degrees; so does responsibility. Specific obligations and degrees of obligatoriness

will vary according to the system of values in a particular culture or group, but because persons are social creatures, because they must harmonize with others in their actions, obligation and responsibility, in themselves, will be universal.

I have argued so far for a description of persons which is based on their possession of certain intellectual abilities. I argued that, in virtue of their ability to form concepts, use symbols to confer meaning, to communicate, to be aware of themselves as agents, and of others as agents, they are moral creatures. In virtue of their being able to plan and execute a course of action, to understand that they have obligations, they carry the burden of responsibility. Being responsible is thus linked with knowing, knowing what we are doing and what significance our actions have. Because persons are expected to have this kind of knowledge, being responsible is part of being a person.

The fact that we do hold persons responsible for their actions is proof that we also have a belief that persons are the same through time, that the person who robbed the bank yesterday, and the person, of the same description, who confesses his crime today, are one and the same. That is, the concept of responsibility presupposes that of personal identity. If we had reason to doubt that persons are identical through time, our application of the concept of responsibility would be made extremely difficult. Just how much strain this concept can bear when confronted with a challenge to our ordinary notion of personal identity, will be the subject of the last chapter.

Ascriptions of responsibility presuppose personal identity, but they also presuppose that we have criteria for identifying a certain person. The criterion we usually use for identifying a person and calling him "the same", is bodily continuity. We identify a person by recognising his body, and we connect him with a past person by tracing a spatio-temporally continuous path which he has followed.

Thus, the criterion we usually use for identity ascriptions, which in its turn is presupposed by responsibility-ascriptions, is dependent upon persons having bodies. I now want to turn to the question of whether we can make intelligible the notion of an agent, a person, without a body.²

I think, first of all, that we can make the notion of disembodied agency itself intelligible by examining the ordinary notion of action and granting to an action performed by a disembodied agent, the requisite "parts" of action. A description by analogy is necessary, because we know what counts as an action for embodied persons, and for any "action" of a disembodied agent to count as an action, it must be recognisable as such, must contain at least some of the elements of an "ordinary" action. When a embodied person moves an article of furniture, there are three elements to the successful completion of the act: his decision, his preparatory acts, in this case, moving and positioning his limbs in such a way as to get a good grasp on the furniture, and his moving of it. Analogously, the disembodied agent, when he decides to move an article of

furniture decides, performs the preparatory act, which, in his case, can be imagined to be some kind of urging, then his moving of it, which is a result of the urging.

A disembodied creature's deciding to act in a certain way is not difficult to imagine. A mental experience does not need, logically, to be related to a physical process or physical equipment, such as the brain. Similarly, "urging" that something move, prior to its actual movement, is not disanalogous to certain practises still adhered to in places, such as casting a spell, or putting a curse on someone, such that the person's life is allegedly endangered. The idea of "urging" that the table move is intelligible if we imagine it as being something like a person's urging that another person die. We do not have to believe that this kind of spell-casting is effective in order to make intelligible the notion of spell-casting. The aim is to get a parallel to "disembodied urging" in our own experience. Lastly, we can imagine the table's moving, or a person's being struck down dead as a result of such "urging"; we can imagine what it would be like if persons had such powers - there would be investigations into the cause of a man's death, and the investigation would include such questions as "Did you see X concentrating hard at the time of Y's death?" Similarly, it is at least intelligible to talk about furniture moving as a result of the "urging" of a disembodied agent.

I think that by drawing this kind of picture with sufficient detail, we can make the concept of disembodied agency intelligible, at least. But this is a far cry from making intelligible the notion

of an identical disembodied agent. How could we make intelligible a statement like "This action was performed by the same disembodied agent as past action p"?

The only criterion of identity for a disembodied person is memory. Obviously there is no question of identifying, and hence drawing up criteria for identity, through recognising his body. If memory is to act as a criterion for personal identity for a disembodied person, it must be memory in the strong sense, that is, where remembering x entails that x happened. As well as this, in order for us to use this criterion we must be able to distinguish between such cases of "real remembering" and cases where a person falsely believes he remembers. In order to make this distinction, which is a crucial one to the identity question, we need an outside check. For ordinary persons this check is based on bodily continuity.³ If we are to check the memory claims of a disembodied (or any) person, we must:

- a) be able to recognise him over the present time of the investigation
- b) have available tests, independent of the memory claim itself, by which we can verify or falsify this claim.
- c) be able to identify the person of the present who is making the memory claims with the person of the past with whom he claims to be identical. If we use the memory criterion for this, we are in a vicious circle and have not proven, indeed cannot prove, anything. The usefulness of the memory criterion is thus parasitic upon another criterion, generally that of bodily continuity.

An added difficulty is how to make intelligible the ownership of experiences for disembodied persons. The only way we can make sense of "the owner of experience E2 at the time T2 is the same disembodied persons as the owner of experience E1 at time T1" is by saying that the owner of experience E2 remembers E1. Now, we cannot claim that the having of #2 and the remembering of E1 are successive experiences of person P, for this is the very thing we are trying to make sense of. If we say, on the other hand, that they are simultaneous experiences of P, we need some criterion of individuation which makes it possible to claim that they are the experiences of one subject rather than two distinct subjects. No such criterion is available for disembodied persons.

It seems, then, that we cannot make intelligible the notion of disembodied persons, for we cannot draw up any criteria for personal identity which make it possible to make claims and to verify these claims, about the identity of disembodied "persons".

If we can formulate no criteria for personal identity, then we cannot identify persons. Since we have no principle of individuation, it is impossible to distinguish one disembodied "person" from another. Identification is a necessary condition for responsibility ascriptions. If we cannot identify a certain disembodied "person" and verify the claim that he is the same as he who performed a certain action in the past, we cannot apply the concept of responsibility. I have argued, in the first part of this chapter, that being responsible is an important part of being a person. I can now claim that we cannot

make intelligible the notion of a disembodied person, for part of being a person is being held to be, and holding others to be, morally responsible, and we cannot make responsibility ascriptions where we cannot identify persons.

These comments on identity for disembodied persons demonstrate the importance of bodily continuity to the concept of a person. The importance of bodily continuity as a criterion for personal identity has already been shown. The possession of a body is significant in another way. Not only is it important in identifying others, but it fills out the notion of a person as agent. It is through the possession of a body that I recognise this causal agent, who initiates a series of physical changes by means of the same body. Bodily continuity is necessary for the notion of an identical causal agent. Being an identical causal agent is necessary for establishing personal identity. Personal identity, in its turn, is presupposed by ascriptions of responsibility, and that persons are responsible for their actions follows from our description of, and the ordinary understanding of, persons.

CHAPTER VI : Parfitian Survival

My discussion of persons so far has been concerned with the predicates we apply to them, the areas within which those predicates can properly be ascribed, and those areas where they are no longer appropriate. I have been describing persons as we know them, within the ordinary everyday context where we talk about, and have criteria for talking about, persons being "the same" from one day to the next. Now I want to consider whether we can properly apply these person predicates in another situation where we do not have criteria for personal identity. I briefly mentioned that many of the characteristics we properly ascribe to persons (being agents, being responsible) seem to presuppose sameness of person. I will now discuss a view which attempts to make these person predicates intelligible where they do not depend on sameness of person. I hope to show that many of the important person predicates are also "same person" predicates.

Derek Parfit, in his paper "personal Identity" maintains that questions about personal identity are not necessarily answerable, and that this matters very little, because we all have a false picture of the identity question and its importance. Parfit says that it is because we believe that questions about memory, survival, and responsibility presuppose questions about personal identity that we, naturally, feel there is an urgency in being able to successfully answer the question, "When is a person the same person?". He proposes to show that questions about identity are not presupposed by questions about

memory, survival, and responsibility. He deals first with survival. Using Wiggins' example¹ of Brown I and Brown II, who each have half of the original Brown's brain, he says that it is sensible to say that Brown survives as two people, but this in no way entails that Brown is these two people. Hence, according to Parfit, we can separate questions about identity from questions about survival.

Next he deals with psychological continuity. Because psychological continuity is assumed to be a one-one relationship, we feel that a correct description of a person as being the same in time is important because it implies psychological continuity. Parfit attempts to show that psychological continuity is not necessarily a one-one relation, and hence can be separated from identity questions also. If we have two people claiming to be psychologically continuous with Guy Fawkes, we can either bring in another criterion (bodily continuity) and say that only one is, or we can give them equal credit and say "as in Wiggins' case, that each limb of the branching relation is as good as survival".² So psychological continuity, when it is non-branching, logically one-one, can serve as a criterion for personal identity, but the two can be separated.

Parfit looks at memory next. He defines what he calls "q-memory" such that it could involve remembering having experiences which were not mine. I only assume that my memories must be of experiences I had because, in fact, I do not have q-memories of the experiences of others. If I did, I would ask of every memory, "Is it of an experience," and "Whose?". By this definition, every memory is a q-memory. Memories of my own experiences are q-memories, and

only contingently "real memories". So now the concept "memory" does not presuppose sameness of person.

He tries to do the same thing with intentions. Intentions are redefined as "q-intentions", by which definition one can now q-intend to perform another's actions. He illustrates the use of this concept in the Wiggins' example.³ Brown q-intends that Brown I will continue with Brown's career, while Brown II will try something new.

Let us take a closer look at these concepts, q-remembering and q-intending. Making q-remembering logically prior to remembering my own experiences, Parfit does indeed make it impossible to use memory as a criterion for personal identity. However, this move introduces unforeseen difficulties for Parfit. He assumes that it will be possible to answer the question we will ask of every q-memory, that is, whose experience is being q-remembered. We can no longer use memory as the individuating principle for persons, for in order to claim memories as mine, I need a separate criterion for verifying these memory claims. The obvious choice is bodily continuity. This is what we normally appeal to when a memory claim is under investigation. However, it is unclear whether we can claim memories as our own even if we do have bodies to which our experiences are uniquely related. For we now have the grounds for a general scepticism about memory. How would we go about verifying our physical presence at some past event? We cannot obtain this verification by appealing to the memories of others present at the same event, for they have the same difficulty - their memory claims are as suspect as ours are.

Parfit seems unaware of this difficulty.

I wonder if by changing "remembering" into q-remembering" Parfit has not made the notion of remembering indistinguishable from simple imagining. I have discussed the difficulty of distinguishing the subject of the experience q-remembered from other possible subjects. Now I want to suggest that Parfit cannot offer an answer to the first question we must ask of every q-memory, that is, "Is it of an experience?". It seems that I cannot determine that it is of an experience of mine. How can I discover whether it is, in fact, a memory of a past event at all, and not just a day-dream I am having? Even though we are not, in fact, able to q-remember, there are times when it is difficult to distinguish a bona fide memory from an imagining. In such cases we fall back on the memory claims of others, or look for some kind of empirical evidence to verify our memory claims. The first alternative is, once again, unhelpful in Parfit's world, and the second, that is, finding some empirical evidence, not always possible. We can conclude, then, that the difficulties involved in q-remembering make it almost impossible to distinguish a q-memory from a day-dream.

The occurrence of a q-memory is not separately identifiable. Either we have no q-memories, (no real memories either), or every mental experience is a q-memory. Surely, the latter is not acceptable, for Parfit wants at least to distinguish between q-remembering and q-intending. We are left, then, with a creature which does not have memories, or, if he has them, cannot be sure that they are memories

of his experience, the experience of another, or a day-dream.

We are left with a creature without a history. Parfit wants his creatures to be able to claim some kind of history - although the experiences they "claim" will not be their own, but the experiences of "past selves". How can everyone have his respective history, without knowing whether something he is thinking about actually happened or not? What justification is there for a Parfitian to assert that he has a past? While we may want to say, looking at it from outside, that each "person" has some kind of history, there can be no awareness of a history for the creatures of that world. I will discuss later how this affects their being called "persons".

Parfit fails to give any independent arguments for the logical consistency of the notion of q-intention. He wants to redescribe intending, along with being ambitious, recognising, promising, being responsible, in "q" terms, solely on the basis of his arguments for the consistency of the notion of q-remembering. Because of this, he fails to give a description of what q-intending would be like. We are not told, for instance, whether another person's q-intending that I should perform x is sufficient for my performing x, or whether I must still intend to perform x, along with the q-intentions of others. I think that when we try to set up an example of q-intending, the notion itself is seen to be confused and inadequate. Let us try to imagine what such a performance would be like. Supposing I q-intend that y, another person, should go to the store and bring home

some milk. Either x goes (which would presumably be the case if x himself intended to go, did not change his mind, and was not prevented from going by some external cause), or x does not go. If x goes, is it because I q-intended it or not? If my q-intention is not a major causal determinant for x's going, then the relationship between my q-intending and x's going is dissimilar to the relationship between x's intending and x's going. If x intends to go, and is able to, and does not change his mind, we can expect him to go. If my q-intending that x should go to the store, and x's being able to go to the store do not result in x's going to the store, then my q-intending does not bear an important relation to x's actions, but would be better described as wishing that x would go, or trying to persuade x to go. If that is what Parfit means by q-intention, then it is not a redescription of the concept of intention at all. However, if x does go to the store when I q-intend that he should, then it seems that x is no longer able to control his own actions, that x is, in an important sense, not a person, but some sort of robot which I, or some other q-intender, can control. If Parfit wants q-intention to be the same, in causal terms, as ordinary intention, then he must also redescribe the creatures he refers to as persons, in different terms. If we conclude that x is some kind of robot, some extension of myself, we are no further ahead, because my intentions are not exempt from violation by the q-intending of others either. I am not a person, in the sense of being a creature who can control his own actions, either.

Q-intending is different from q-remembering in this sense, that while someone else's remembering my experience is unpleasant to my sense of privacy, it does not tamper with my freedom to choose to act according to my own desires. I am still free to work out the future in terms of my own intentions. Once we allow q-intention, we have already moved a significant step away from one of the more important aspects of the concept of a person - a person as free to act, and responsible for his decisions and their consequences. In a Parfitian world, the concept of responsibility would surely be, if not inapplicable, very difficult to apply. For if we do not have personal identity, or even a history, our actions, even if we intend them and subsequently perform them ourselves, may not have been due only to our intentions, but to numerous q-intentions of other subjects. How would one determine who is responsible? And without personal identity there may, at the time we are considering whom to praise or blame, be no-one who is the same person as he who performed the action, even if he, at the time, performed it solely in terms of his own intentions.

Parfit's world is surely an odd one, if it is claimed to be a world of persons. These "persons" find it difficult to distinguish memories from day-dreams, their intentions from the intentions of others, or even themselves from other subjects of experience. Given the possibility of q-experiencing (which is in some ways incoherent, as I hope I have pointed out), we get a picture of a kind of world consciousness. There is no principle of individuation. Parfit says

that it would be necessary to ask of every memory whose experience it captures, but it is not at all clear that there would be any criteria for answering this question, unless one could answer "Everyone's", for many may have q-intended, remembered, or desired the experience along with me.

Parfit may indeed have shown that questions about personal identity are separable from those about survival, psychological continuity, and responsibility. But when he has given us a look at his world, we are left with the same question which prompted our inquiry into persons: What is it to be a person? Can I properly be called a person in Parfit's world? How can I recognize myself? If what Parfit shows us is survival, then survival is not the costume in which to present these questions I am asking. I could just as easily claim that my body survives, feeds the soil, makes plants grow, and that I survive that way. But neither of these interpretations of survival is relevant to the question which for me is a crucial one: What am I, and how do I individuate myself from the rest of the world? Parfitian survival is not my survival as a person. The characteristics which we attribute to persons, which form an important part of our concept of a person, fall into disuse once we can no longer presuppose personal identity. I have argued that one of the features that sets persons apart from other creatures is their ability to plan a future, to choose to act, and to be held responsible for this choice. Someone in our world who is not able to do these things is not considered to be a fully-fledged

person. Survival in Parfit's sense would entail abandoning this dimension of being a person, forfeiting our freedom.

In part VI of Parfit's paper, he explains that his approach to questions of identity has certain valuable consequences, in the ethical realm. First of all, Parfit sees the principle of self-interest as stemming from the belief that we are separate from everyone else, and that everyone ceases to exist at death, finally and completely. These beliefs, he claims, are not natural but are fed by misconceptions about personal identity and the isomorphic relation of survival. If we were to take Parfit's view, however, we would benefit in two ways. We would see that we are really not so separate from others - that we may, at some future time, share many areas of conscious life with them, and also, we shall survive as others. This should make a significant difference to the way we treat others, and make our lives (as us) less anxious. But Parfit offers us no good reason to think in his way, for he admits that what he has done in his paper is merely describe a possible state of affairs where questions of identity would be separate from questions of survival. He has not suggested for a moment that his picture represents a real state of affairs. This being the case, if he converts people to his way of thinking, he is doing nothing more than giving them false hope (although the prospect of Parfitian survival is anything but a comfort to me!). There is no evidence that this kind of survival is likely. The idea of Parfitian survival is certainly less familiar to most of

us than the idea of personal survival after death. If the idea of judgment and everlasting pain or pleasure does not motivate us to be more just in our dealings with others, the strange and less personal concept of survival Parfit offers is even less likely to succeed.

CONCLUSION

I have discussed, in the previous chapters, several dimensions of our concept of a person, and tried to show how they are interconnected. Persons are intellectual creatures. They have access to different kinds of knowledge: knowledge about the world, about other persons, and self-conscious awareness of themselves as part of that world. Because of this awareness, persons meet the intellectual requirements for being moral. They are able to take up a moral attitude - to understand that they have duties and obligations. They are able to perceive the effects of their actions on others, and understand when they inflict pleasure or pain. Persons are aware of themselves as causal agents. They recognize and claim a series of past actions, and can plan and carry out a series of future ones. Because persons are planners, because they can form intentions, and because of the special knowledge available to them, they are held praise or blame worthy for the actions which they choose to perform. All these descriptions of persons require that persons be self-identical in the past and that we may, with some degree of assurance, predict that the same applies to the future.

The notion of a person as an intellectual creature requires a history of personal experiences, of learning to use symbols, of forming concepts, of recognizing, remembering, and categorising. The person as a moral creature requires a storehouse of experiences -

in particular, experiences which teach about the effects of actions on others. To understand ourselves as agents, we must be able to identify ourselves as the same throughout a series of performances. And, finally, to be a sincere planner, an intender, requires belief that the person who plans, desires, hopes and dreams today will be the person who can begin to execute these plans tomorrow.

We have looked at a description of "persons" who are not justified in believing that they will be "the same" tomorrow, and found it hard to apply our person predicates at all. We have no basis for judging, identifying, individuating. This prospect is supposed to give us a good reason to behave in a more disinterested fashion towards others. However, I believe the concept of a person that we have and use gives us sufficient grounds for treating other persons with respect and consideration, for it paints the picture of creatures who are all able to plan, to dream, to have ambitions and desires; who are also able to be disappointed, sad, to make mistakes, to fail. We are able to recognize in other persons something of ourselves - our concept of a person as someone who carries the responsibility for his own life. This is surely equally likely to motivate in us "disinterested" concern.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

1. Strawson, P.F.: Individuals, p. 100.
2. There can, however, be disembodied former persons, as Strawson mentions at the end of chapter 3 of Individuals.
3. I will be using "animal" to mean non-person, and "creature" to mean "animal or person".
4. Puccetti, R.: Persons, p. 8.

Chapter II

1. For example, J. Bennett, in Rationality endows his bees with a dance language, each dance standing for a different kind of proposition.

Chapter III

1. Puccetti says that the moral predicates belong in the P column because "they are so bound up in the very concept of a person".
2. Hampshire, Stuart: Thought and Action, p. 174.
3. These two criteria for being a moral agent are not necessarily sufficient. Puccetti, for example, wants to make "feeling" one of the necessary conditions for being moral.

Chapter IV

1. I am reserving the word "action" to describe things which only persons can do, for reasons which I hope will become

FOOTNOTES Cont..

clear. I want "act" to be a neutral term to describe things which creatures do, and "movement" to describe things which happen.

2. Hampshire, Stuart: Thought and Action, p. 97.

Chapter V

1. I owe these distinctions to R. Bradley. He sets out six levels of criteria for the application of the term "responsible" in the paper, "When Is A Man Responsible?"
2. I will be relying heavily on T. Penelhum's Survival and Disembodied Existence.
3. This criticism can be applied generally when the memory criterion is claimed to be able to stand alone.

Chapter VI

1. Wiggins, D.: Identity and Spatio-Temporal Continuity, chapter 4.
2. Parfit, Derek: "Personal Identity", p. 13.
3. Wiggins, D.: op. cit.

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